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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000424

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR A A/S CARTER, SE GRATION, AF/SPG, AF/E, AF/C  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS TO USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: GOS CAUTIOUSLY HESITANT ABOUT POSSIBLE SE GRATION  
VISIT

REF: A. KHARTOUM 390  
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 306  
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 249  
[1](#)D. KHARTOUM 204

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) On March 25, a vaguely positive, but guarded Government of National Unity (GNU) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Under Secretary (U/S) Mutriff Siddiq told CDA Fernandez that he would have to consult with Foreign Minister Deng Alor and GNU President Al-Bashir upon their return from Cairo about the acceptability of a March 30-April 6 trip by Special Envoy Gration to Sudan. He cautioned that many GNU leaders, including Deng Alor, Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Al Samani Al Wasila, will not be in Khartoum on March 30 and/or 31 because of three nearly simultaneous events: the Doha Arab League Summit (30 March), a Brussels IGAD/EU meeting (31 March), and a tripartite AU/UN/GNU meeting in El Fasher (31 March). He stated that in his personal opinion this is "the worst time of all" for the visit. On the contrary, said the CDA, this is an opportune time for the GoS to embrace an SE visit because it comes only two weeks after the ICC announcement and the INGO expulsions.

[1](#)2. (C) In Siddiq's opinion, GoS engagement with the U.S. is important, however, he cautioned that others within the NCP do not necessarily agree with him. He explained that the GoS wants the first visit of the new SE to be "successful" and "constructive" and done in the "right way." Siddiq expressed disappointment that the GNU had not received any official note from the USG regarding the appointment and the mandate of Major General Scott Gration (ret.) as Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan, nor a response from the Obama Administration to the GNU's official letters to the U.S. President congratulating him on his election and welcoming USG-GNU cooperation (refs D). "It is as if you don't respect us," he complained. We have only heard about SE Gration's appointment in the media, and it is "contrary to our traditions" to meet with him in the absence of official notification of his role, said Siddiq. Despite his gripes about the proposed timing of the SE visit and the lack of bureaucratic formalities, the Under Secretary said "we are willing to deal in a very constructive manner with the new envoy" and told the CDA he would get back to the Embassy on March 26 with a formal GNU response to the acceptability of the visit.

[1](#)3. (C) The CDA remarked that the National Congress Party (NCP) had denied him permission to see any of its officials since his March 7 meeting with GNU Presidential Advisor Ghazi

Salah Eddin but that he had indeed officially informed Foreign Minister Alor of the new Special Envoy (NCP and SPLM officials in the same ministry often do not share information). He said that it is important for the USG and the Government of Sudan (GoS) to maintain a dialogue during the current "dynamic" time and cautioned that a lack of dialogue could be "dangerous." CDA also asked if the MFA's recent denial of his Darfur travel permit signaled a policy change banning him and/or others from traveling to Darfur. Siddiq responded quickly, "not at all" and mildly counseled the CDA that the MFA had advised him not to go to Darfur on his last trip for security reasons (ref A). We have enough problems of our own right now and we don't want anything to happen to you or other diplomats, Siddiq claimed. The U/S explained that due to heightened tensions on the ground in Darfur, the GoS cannot ensure the safety of diplomats in Darfur and now is not a good time to be there. He admitted that sometimes things happen that are beyond the control of the GoS although he surmised that CDA's party was probably protected by Minni Minnawi's gunmen during his recent visit. Your safety is our responsibility, said Siddiq. He added that the GoS had just denied the German Ambassador permission to travel to Darfur for that very reason.

14. (C) CDA brought to Siddiq's attention the international Arabic press allegations by Sudanese Minister of State for Transport Mubarak Mabrouk Salem (a Rashaida tribesman and himself a notorious smuggler) that the U.S. had "bombed" Sudan (ref C). Siddiq said he had been asked about this by the media that morning, but refused to comment. He stated that Minister Salem had been speaking for himself and not for the regime. Salem had been informed "by another country" that

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the bombing had been by the U.S., it had not been instigated by the GoS. Siddiq and the CDA agreed that it is best for both sides to continue not to comment in order to let the issue die. Siddiq confirmed to the CDA that he had relayed to the most senior GoS "authorities" weeks ago the USG message that the bombing had not been carried out by the US .

15. (C) CDA reiterated to the U/S that the March 4 decision by the NCP to expel INGOs was a "disastrous mistake." (ref B) He asked U/S Siddiq if he had seen the joint Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC)-UN report for the Darfur joint assessment mission and its read-out of the very serious situation on the ground in Darfur (septel). Siddiq said that he had seen the report and admitted that it recognizes "the gap (in humanitarian assistance support) is real". But urged that the UN and HAC embrace their agreement to "join hands" and resolve the issue. Siddiq said he also spoke with UNICEF Deputy Director Hilde Johnson about the situation in Darfur during her recent visit to Sudan. He said that in discussions with Johnson, he urged the international community to "leave the issue of the expulsions behind" and work together with the GoS to "breech the gap." Siddiq acknowledged that the U.S. is the largest provider of support to the World Food Program (WFP) and NGOs in Darfur, and said that he had told HAC to reassure and support the remaining NGOs "who have been mistreated" and allow them to carry out their work. He also said that while the issue of NGO access and harassment has been an issue in South Darfur for a long time, the GoS is "focusing" on this and addressing the problem.

16. (C) Comment: The GoS has a critical decision to make in the next 24 hours regarding the proposed visit of Presidential Special Envoy Gration to Sudan. The proposal of the visit will certainly force the GoS to weigh its desire for engagement with the USG - and in particularly the new U.S. Administration - (which will not be easy given the NCP itself is divided on this issue) with its desire to continue snubbing the West and stoking mass hysteria since the ICC's issuance of an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir on March 4. As always, the NCP will calculate its potential gains and losses from the result of its decision. If the more moderate,

rational and "clever" voices in the NCP win out, the visit will go forward. If not, it means that Al-Bashir is not quite over his post-ICC temper tantrum.

FERNANDEZ